

Daily Practices: Gratitude Journaling and What Went Well?

Here are two exercises from positive psychology. Practice these on a daily basis to improve your short-term positive feeling and increase your personal resources in the long-term. When you “broaden and build” you not only feel better, you actively boost your coping skills, making you better able to handle and bounce back from stressful situations.

Gratitude Journal

In a gratitude journal, you write down a few things every night before going to bed that you’re grateful for that day. You can type, but writing by hand has more sticking power. As you think back on your day and write, spend some moments savouring how you feel about those things. You can list anything from sunny skies and a cuddly cat to receiving good news about a major fellowship! The point of the exercise is to get in touch with the good in your daily life, experiencing and compounding positive feeling to increase well-being and resiliency in the short- and long-term. Go to bed with the best parts of your day in mind. Try this for a week, at least to start!

What Went Well?

What Went Well? is a twist on keeping a gratitude journal. In this exercise, you’re prompted to go further and deeper. Sometimes, daily journaling can be repetitive and lose its punch. Then, you get diminishing short- and long-term returns on your savouring time. You can cut down the number of times you write in your journal, doing it only three times a week, for example. Or, you can switch to doing this exercise.

For WWW, spend time writing down three things that went well for you that day. That’s the first part. Second, add a sentence about why it happened that way, what it means to you, or how you can have more of this good thing in future. Try doing this for at least a week . . . and then keep going!

Let me know how it goes for you!

For more information, check out...

Fredrickson, Barbara L. “The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions.” *Philosophical Transactions B*, 359, no. 1449 (29 Sep 2004): 1367–78.

Seligman, Martin E. P. *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*. New York: The Free Press, 2002.

_____. *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*. New York: The Free Press, 2011.